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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRUSSELS 000054

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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, INL, INL/AP, EUR/ERA, EUR/RPM, DOD  
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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: EU OFFICIALS SUPPORT ASHDOWN AND  
WORRY ABOUT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN MISSION

REF: A. A) SECSTATE 1001  
[1](#)B. B) BRUSSELS 2603

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CHRISTOPHER W. MURRAY FOR REASONS 1.4  
(b) AND (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman and State Department Counselor Eliot Cohen met with EU Council Secretariat officials January 8 in Brussels to discuss Afghanistan. EU Director General for External Political and Military Affairs Robert Cooper told Edelman and Cohen the EU should have no problem accepting our proposed terms of reference for a UN Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan. He suggested that in the coming months when the EU names a new EU Special Representative for Afghanistan the EU would want that person to interact extensively with the UN Senior Civilian Representative.

[1](#)2. (C) EU interlocutors described negative European public opinion toward their own involvement in Afghanistan as an obstacle, but not a deal-breaker. EU officials pressed the U.S. to back them up on their policies in Afghanistan, including on counternarcotics. They also asked for U.S. help in resolving the NATO/EU blockage related to Turkey's veto over Cypriot involvement in ESDP missions and requested bilateral U.S.-EU agreements that would allow the U.S. to support EUPOL and other ESDP missions. Cohen and Edelman responded to their questions and concerns and stressed the importance of working together to make the Afghanistan mission a success. End Summary.

Introduction  
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[1](#)3. (U) Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman, State Department Counselor Eliot Cohen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy Daniel

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Fata, and Secretary of Defense Representative to Europe Bruce Weinrod Director met with senior EU Council Secretariat officials over a dinner January 8 hosted by the USEU Charge. EU officials present included Director General for External Political and Military Affairs Robert Cooper, Director of the Policy Planning Unit Helga Schmid, Special Counselor to High Representative Solana Steven Everts, Director for Defense Issues Claude-France Arnould, Deputy Director General for

European Security and Defense Policy Pieter Feith, Director General of the EU Military Staff Lt. Gen. David Leakey, and Director for Transatlantic Relations Marek Grela.

GREEN LIGHT ON ASHDOWN  
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¶4. (C) Counselor Cohen outlined the USG vision for the role of UN Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan and our support for Lord Paddy Ashdown in that role (REF A). Cohen clarified that the UN Secretary General would make the appointment. Ashdown would not control resources or have his own budget other than for his staff. While we currently anticipate that he would not be &triple-hatted8, we hope that other international actors would follow Ashdown,s lead. Robert Cooper said those terms should not present a problem for the EU. Cooper also indicated that the EU would be naming its new Special Representative for Afghanistan in the coming months. Cooper expected the EU to include in its new representative,s job description an expectation of close cooperation between the senior EU and UN officials.

¶5. (C) Several EU officials expressed surprise that Ashdown would want the job, but none of them objected to his candidacy. Arnould said that Ashdown should play a role in coordinating counternarcotics efforts. Feith stressed the importance of Afghan &ownership8 and said Ashdown must have a clear strategy on how to back up national Afghan efforts. Edelman responded that we were in complete agreement.

PUBLIC OPINION: AN OBSTACLE, NOT A CUL-DE-SAC  
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¶6. (C) Edelman told EU interlocutors that the U.S. worried about insufficient appreciation among European publics for

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the high stakes in Afghanistan. Many Europeans see Afghanistan as a problem for the U.S. or UK (and not others) to deal with. He said the international community needed to recognize the stakes and the scale of the challenge in Afghanistan. Edelman referred to the U.S. administration,s budget requests for Afghanistan as an illustration of the magnitude of the problems and our commitment to engagement. It was critical that European leaders in individual countries do a better job of getting the message out about the importance of Afghanistan. He applauded French President Sarkozy,s recent trip to Afghanistan and suggested it should be followed up with more commitments by European countries. The message should be passed that if Afghanistan were to return to its pre-2001 conditions, there would be enormous consequences.

¶7. (C) Cooper agreed that most Europeans do not see Afghanistan as priority for their governments. The biggest problem is that European publics do not see Afghanistan as a threat to their security. Even EU Foreign Ministers rarely discussed Afghanistan at their monthly sessions and the mission to Chad has as much, or more salience for many European governments as their commitment to Afghanistan. Feith observed that if we must sustain a 20-year combat role in Afghanistan, European publics will look for cheaper and equally effective ways of countering the terrorist threat to them that originates in Afghanistan itself. Lt. General David Leakey added that even in the UK, where there had been terrorist attacks and threats, people perceived home-grown terrorism as a bigger problem and one which was easier and more cost-effective to combat, through the MI5. He said that Europe lacked what he called the U.S. &sound bite8 of September 11, which enabled us to convince our public of the importance of winning in Afghanistan.

¶8. (C) EU Council Secretariat Defense Issues Director Arnould said another problem is a public sense of fatalism about Afghanistan. She argued that even in countries like France that do perceive a threat, people do not believe success in

Afghanistan is likely and thus don't see the point in increasing contributions to the cause. As an illustration, she explained that it is difficult for politicians to convince citizens of the value of additional contributions, i.e., what difference will another twenty helicopters make? She added that people did not see enough success stories in Afghanistan. Cooper questioned whether allies had ever actually agreed to engagement in Afghanistan as a strategy for combating terrorism. He suspected there had been no such agreement on strategy ) that countries had simply gone in to Afghanistan under pressure from the U.S.

¶9. (C) Edelman countered that there were major successes: the Afghans had written a constitution, elected a parliament, built schools. He questioned what the Europeans proposed that the U.S. do. A fatalist response would mean doing nothing and just letting the counternarcotics problem, among others, get worse. Leakey responded that these problems constituted obstacles, but were not a cul-de-sac.

#### EU ASKS FOR U.S. BACK-UP ON POLICY

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¶10. (C) Counselor Cohen asked EU interlocutors how the U.S. could help in addressing some of the problems they had just outlined. Several Council officials stressed that European commitment would be bolstered by a perception of strong U.S. commitment to consult allies on policy. Feith noted that some U.S. officials had said they had intended to proceed with aerial spraying to counter poppy cultivation without taking into account EU views, which were strongly opposed to aerial spraying. On police reform, he said his impression was that the U.S. had a certain view about what had to be done, which the EU could not influence. Counselor Cohen responded that the U.S. had deferred to President Karzai's wish on aerial spraying. More broadly, he suggested that the weight of individual countries, influence on strategy in Afghanistan will be proportionate to their efforts there.

#### NATO-EU BLOCKAGE

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¶11. (C) Arnault raised the issue of Turkey's blockage of NATO/EU coordination on the EU's police training mission for Afghanistan (EUPOL). She asked whether the U.S. could help resolve the problem. Cooper added that NATO had pressed the EU to develop the police training mission, and the EU would like to build on it, but they are hampered by this blockage and its consequences. As an example, he noted that as a result, the EU has to send people to Afghanistan with only the same level of security that NGOs receive. Cooper added that the EU is willing to make concessions to Turkey if they are confident that Turkey is in a mood to give back.8

¶12. (C) Edelman responded that Turkey was very aggrieved by the still-unresolved Cyprus problem, and the Turks saw the NATO-EU blockage as their main leverage. He added that the Turks were preoccupied with other problems, but that the U.S. continues to raise this point with the GOT. (Note: separately, after the dinner, Leakey raised with DAS Fata the EU's request for USG support for the EUPOL police training mission (REF B). Leakey argued that in light of the probability that the general NATO/EU blockage will not be resolved for perhaps ten years or more, it was important that the U.S. and EU reach bilateral agreements on how to coordinate, not just on EUPOL in Afghanistan but in other areas where NATO-EU cooperation could be blocked. Fata assured him we would continue to work on finding a solution to this problem. End Note.)

¶13. (U) This message has been cleared by Under Secretary Edelman and Counselor Cohen.

MURRAY